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AUTHOR NOAK, JOHN R.; AND OTHERS
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ABSTRACT

A NUMBER OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTRUCTIONAL PROBLEMS ARISE FROM THE FACT THAT MANY CHILDREN CONTINUE TO BE TAUGHT BY PERSONS WHO DO NOT HOLD REGULAR TEACHING CERTIFICATES. THE TWO-FOLD PURPOSE OF THE STUDY SUMMARIZED IN THIS REPORT WAS TO DISCOVER WAYS TO ASSIST THESE PROVISIONALLY CERTIFICATED TEACHERS TO OBTAIN A REGULAR CERTIFICATE AND TO REDUCE THE NEED FOR PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATION IN THE FUTURE. THE TWO GROUPS OF PEOPLE MOST DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY CERTIFICATION POLICIES OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS (SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS AND PROVISIONALLY CERTIFICATED TEACHERS) WERE ASKED TO RESPOND TO A QUESTIONNAIRE WHICH ASKED THE FOLLOWING FOUR OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS: (1) WHAT COULD THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION DO TO ASSIST PROVISIONALLY CERTIFICATED TEACHERS IN OBTAINING REGULAR CERTIFICATES? (2) WHAT COULD THE TEACHER PREPARATION INSTITUTIONS DO? (3) WHAT SPECIFIC COURSES WOULD BE MOST USEFUL? AND (4) WHAT ALTERNATIVES TO THE CURRENT CERTIFICATION SYSTEM WOULD YOU SUGGEST? AMONG THE MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY, BASED ON ANALYSIS AND CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONSES, WERE: THAT VIEWS OF BOTH TEACHERS AND SUPERINTENDENTS WERE HIGHLY CONVERGENT, THAT FULFILLMENT OF THE STUDENT TEACHING REQUIREMENT IS PERCEIVED AS THE NUMBER ONE PROBLEM; AND THAT IMPROVED COUNSELING PROGRAMS, INCREASED FLEXIBILITY IN STUDENT TEACHING AND GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS, AND GREATER INTERINSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION IN BOTH IMMEDIATE AND LONG-RANGE PLANNING ARE ESSENTIAL. (A RELATED DOCUMENT IS SP 003 582.) (JES)

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VIEWPOINTS ON

PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATION

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Viewpoints on Provisional Certification

Editor

Doctor John R. Noak
Assistant Director
Department of Educational Research
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

Contributing Editors

Margaret Lindman and Earl Carr

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I. INTRODUCTION

The official records of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in Illinois reveal that we have had teachers holding provisional certificates (or the equivalent) in Illinois since at least 1874. At that time the certificates were called emergency certificates. Continuously since that time, Illinois school districts have employed a varying number of persons to teach in their schools who lacked a regular certificate. The title applied to the person teaching without a regular certificate, as well as the name of the certificate itself, has changed over the years. At times, both provisional and emergency certificates have been issued. But whatever name has been applied to certificates other than regular certificates, the basic fact remains that large numbers of children have been taught, and continue to be taught, by persons not holding regular teaching certificates. That many provisionally certificated teachers have done an excellent job while some regularly certificated teachers have not, does not mitigate this basic fact.

It also does little to assuage the problems inherent in provisional certification on the part of the teachers, administrators, and county superintendents who must continually insure that these certificates are current and valid.

The reasons why provisional certificates have been issued over the years have been most reasonable on the whole. Wars, population booms, and even depressions have all served as a rationale for the issuance of emergency or provisional certificates.

It must also be acknowledged that certification requirements have been raised over the years. A person entering teaching today must have higher "paper" qualifications than ever before.

Still, the fact remains that approximately 8% of the total public school teaching staff in Illinois (exclusive of Chicago) hold provisional certificates. There are many reasons that could be cited to account for this fact. But with the great prosperity of our State, and our nation, and with the tremendous educational resources of Illinois, it is not enough to cite reasons "why not." Something should be done to assist provisionally certificated teachers to obtain a regular certificate and to reduce the need for provisional certification in the future.

The two studies contained within this report were initiated with this purpose in mind. They contain data on the perceptions of superintendents and provisionally certificated teachers as to what the "something" that should be done should be.

II. PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATION IN ILLINOIS

How School Superintendents View Four Critical Questions

As part of the multi-faceted study on provisionally certificated personnel in Illinois, a questionnaire was sent to all district superintendents within the State of Illinois in April, 1968. The purpose of this questionnaire was to obtain their opinions on four critical questions in the area of teacher certification, particularly as they apply to the specific needs and problems of teachers holding provisional certificates.

The basic assumption for soliciting their opinions, of course, lies with the fact that they are more closely involved with the problems of provisionally certificated teachers than any other group, except the teachers themselves. Therefore, their ideas and opinions are of great potential value in the formulation of an overall program to assist provisionally certificated teachers to obtain regular certificates.

Of the 1,315 superintendents to whom questionnaires were sent, 1,005 responded. This represented 76% of the total group polled. The size of the respondent group, as well as the geographical distribution and size range of the districts represented by this group, would appear to minimize the possibility of an unduly biased sample.

Each of the district superintendents was asked the four following open-ended questions:

Question One: In your opinion, what could the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction do to assist provisionally certificated teachers in obtaining regular certificates?

Question Two: In your opinion, what could the teacher preparation institutions do to assist provisionally certificated teachers in obtaining regular certificates?

Question Three: What specific courses would be most useful for provisionally certificated teachers?

Question Four: What alternatives to the current certification system would you suggest?

The responses to each question were analyzed and then categorized. It must be acknowledged that in the process of categorizing the responses some of the original flavor was lost, but this is an expected consequence of any sifting process. To make this report more manageable, only the first ten most frequently made responses to each question will be included.

After an initial inspection of the responses, it became obvious that in many cases superintendents did not perceive the distinction between actions appropriate to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and teacher training institutions in Illinois. As a result, there appears to be a blurring of responses to certain of the questions, especially Questions One and Two. These two questions tended to be answered in exactly the same way by several superintendents. It may be that both teacher certification boards and colleges and universities are seen as somewhat hostile establishments working cooperatively to cause teachers and superintendents problems.

At any rate, the responses to a particular question have been maintained with that question even though the responses may be more appropriate

to another question. In clarification, it also should be pointed out that not every superintendent answered all four questions.

The responses to Question One, which asked what the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction could do to assist provisionally certificated teachers to obtain regular certificates, formed several distinct trends. The first trend centered directly on the question of student teaching. A total of 254 superintendents gave a response which referred directly or indirectly to student teaching. In fact, the first, second, and fourth most popular responses suggested ways of making it easier for teachers to complete the student teaching requirement.

The third most popular response asked that colleges and universities offer extension courses in more locations on a year-round basis, summers included. Implicit in this request, also, is the need for such courses to count toward a degree where necessary. The sixth most frequent response asked that workshops and short courses be set up for teachers needing one or two hours credit, preferably at a location close to the home district. Interrelated with these two concepts is the request that the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction initiate a program to inform teachers when and where courses, required by them, are being offered, and the cost of such courses.

All three of these responses can be seen as forming a second distinct trend. Reduced to essentials, the message they seem to carry is this: Find out exactly what teachers need in the area of course requirements and make it as easy as possible for them to fulfill these requirements.

The third trend to the responses for Question One dealt with ideas

pertaining directly to certification laws and reciprocity of certificates between states.

A fourth trend is found in those responses which asked that the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction both encourage and/or insist that provisionally certificated teachers complete their required work within a given time. Some responses in this area asked that counseling help be provided both prior to graduation from college and/or after employment as a teacher. A list of the ten most frequently mentioned response categories are listed below (frequency noted in parentheses).

Question One: In your opinion, what could the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction do to assist provisionally certificated teachers in obtaining regular certificates?

1. Eliminate the student teaching requirement for experienced teachers or give college credit for student teaching on the basis of three to five years satisfactory teaching experience. (123)
2. Assist in providing student teaching opportunities during the summer. (75)
3. Encourage colleges and universities to offer extension courses in more locations on a year-round basis. (60)
4. Assist in providing on-the-job training to meet the student teaching requirement. (39)
5. Have the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction provide better communications and provide information indicating where required courses are offered, when, and the cost. (31)

6. Set up workshops and short courses for teachers needing one or two hours credit. (29)

7. Provide reciprocity between states for teacher certification. (23)

8. Revise and update certification laws; set a time by which all provisionally certificated teachers must have a degree; issue provisional certificates for substitute teachers. (21)

9. Send each teacher a list of deficiencies and set a time limit in which he should remove them. (17)

10. Have the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction send letters to encourage and/or insist that provisionally certificated teachers complete the work required. (15)

The remaining items, mentioned by the superintendents less than 15 times, contained several interesting ideas. However, they dealt basically with variations on the four major themes noted earlier. There were many comments that the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction should take the lead in encouraging the updating of educational courses. It was felt that many of the courses now required are outdated, and are of no benefit to the teacher in today's schools.

As noted earlier, many responses called for action which is more appropriate to teacher training institutions working alone or in cooperative action with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction than to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Question Two asked what teacher preparation institutions could do to assist provisionally certificated teachers to obtain regular certificates.

A general comment expressed by many of the superintendents here is that the colleges and universities need to take a good, long, hard look at both their required and their elective courses to determine their value in modern education. The superintendents feel that more college instructors should design their courses so that more time is devoted to actual classroom procedures and less to theories. This basic thought seemed to pervade almost all suggestions made despite the specific content of a particular response. That is, while a particular response may have been to provide a course in reading techniques, this same response would call for a new approach to teaching methods of reading.

The ten most popular, specific suggestions are listed below in descending order of the frequency with which they were mentioned (frequency noted in parentheses).

Question Two: In your opinion, what could the teacher preparation institutions do to assist provisionally certificated teachers in obtaining regular certificates?

1. Increase the number of extension courses offered, hold them in more convenient locations, and offer more undergraduate courses. (208)
2. Provide more opportunities to complete the student teaching requirement during the summer months. (128)
3. Allow credit for student teaching while on the job under the supervision of qualified personnel. (79)

4. Provide more guidance to make both the graduate and undergraduate student aware of the requirements for certification. (61)

5. Offer more undergraduate general education courses during the summer session. (27)

6. Allow more flexibility in the transferring of credits. (24)

7. Provide short courses and workshops for credit. (22)

8. Waive the residence requirement for graduation. (19)

9. Coordinate college and university requirements with the requirements of the State Office. (15)

10. Allow credit for student teaching to experienced teachers. (12)

The most frequent response to Question Two asked that colleges and universities increase the number of extension courses available, hold them in more convenient locations, and offer more undergraduate courses. Closely aligned to this recommendation are recommendations five and seven which follow the same basic theme. This theme is, "Bring the colleges to the teachers and make it as easy as possible for them to obtain needed courses." With justification, the universities might claim they are already doing this to a large extent.

Response categories two and three suggested methods of simplifying the satisfaction of the student teaching requirement. Several other response categories with less than 12 respondents also made suggestions dealing with student teaching.

Three of the remaining recommendations seem to ask for greater

flexibility on the part of universities in determining curricular and/or graduation requirements. Finally, recommendation four asks that colleges and universities provide more guidance to make the student aware of the requirements for certification.

"What specific courses would be most useful for provisionally certificated teachers?," was the third question asked of district superintendents. As with Question Two, some general comments were intertwined with specific responses. Many superintendents seemed to feel that most courses in education open to teachers leave much to be desired. They voiced the idea that courses should be more problem-oriented and deal less with theory than practice.

Then again, several voiced the opinion that the problem lay not so much with the course offerings as with persuading teachers to take advantage of the courses. That is, they felt the necessary courses are being offered, but the teachers cannot be persuaded to take them. Anyone who has ever taught or taken an evening or summer course can well understand this basic problem of human inertia which is compounded when a teacher has extra-career responsibilities such as a family and children.

In terms of specific suggestions, the following recommendations were the ten most popular recommendations in response to Question Three (frequency noted in parentheses).

Question Three: What specific courses would be most useful for provisionally certificated teachers?

1. Student teaching. (149)

2. Methods and techniques of teaching including: (121)

   a. methods of teaching reading; (55)

   b. methods of teaching math; (46)

   c. methods of teaching science; (18)

   d. methods of teaching social studies; and (30)

   e. methods of teaching language arts. (11)

3. Professional education courses. (105)

4. American and Illinois history. (18)

5. Art and music. (17)

6. Classroom management. (15)

7. Courses dealing with specialized subject areas. (15)

8. Courses in individualized teaching. (8)

9. Audio-visual material and equipment. (7)

10. Library science. (7)

Once again, we notice student teaching at the head of our list, closely followed in this case by methods and techniques of teaching. As with prior questions, only the first ten categories have been included.

As noted earlier, not every superintendent responded to each question. This became most evident in studying the responses to Question Four which asked for suggested alternatives to the current certification system. The total number of responses to this question was much smaller than to any of the other three questions. To a large extent, also, the responses to Question Three suggested solutions to the problems of particular teachers and school districts, rather than to the general upgrading of education in Illinois.

As might be expected, the number one response in terms of frequency dealt with student teaching. Listed below are the ten most frequent responses to Question Four:

Question Four: What alternative to the current certification system would you suggest?

1. Waive the requirement or give credit for experience for student teaching. (60)
2. Grant a regular certificate after a certain number of years experience (5-8), when local administration recommends granting the certificate or have the teacher passed by a board of review. (40)
3. Provide more reciprocity between states in the area of certification. (29)
4. Grant emergency certificates and require a certain number of hours toward a degree each year for renewal. (15)
5. Develop an internship approach to teacher education; four years of college, one year internship with pay. (12)
6. Abolish provisional certificates. (11)
7. Extend the time limit for completing the requirements. (10)
8. Allow less specific requirements to be accepted; e.g., a grouping of similar courses and more hours of general areas. (8)
9. Require all teachers to acquire five or more semester hours of credit every five years in their field to keep up with new methods. (7)

10. Speed up the process of issuing certificates to reduce the time required for certification. (7)

OVERVIEW

To summarize the results of the questionnaire, it would seem the one outstanding problem facing provisionally certificated teachers is the fulfillment of the student teaching requirement. Many individuals who have entered the teaching profession subsequent to graduation from college are prepared in the content area in which they teach, but lack courses in professional education. Of these courses, student teaching is the most difficult to complete. It is generally felt by district superintendents that after two or more years of successful teaching, it is a waste of time to require this course, especially in an artificial setting such as during the summer sessions. While the majority of respondents seem to feel that credit could be granted for experience or on-the-job training, there were many who felt that inexperienced teachers should be provided more student teaching time under the direct supervision of master teachers.

Many of the superintendents tendered the opinion that since the United States has a mobile population, reciprocity between states should be worked out so that teachers are not subjected to new state certification requirements every time they move.

Concern was also voiced with the courses that are required by the State Teacher Certification Board and the colleges and the universities. In some instances, these certification and graduation requirements are not the

same. Therefore, a teacher must meet two sets of requirements before completing a degree. Many superintendents were concerned with the content of education courses. There was a consensus that many of the educational courses were outdated, a waste of time, and did not give the student the kind of help he needs in dealing with the problems of the classroom. They felt that colleges and universities need to take a long look at the courses they require and update them to better train teachers for the future.

But while there was general agreement in these areas, there were some distinct differences of opinion regarding the provisional certificate. Some felt that it should be abolished because teachers use it as a crutch. Further, they felt the public will not provide the professional personnel needed as long as teachers can be found who will fill in for a few years, often at reduced salaries. Others felt that it is necessary to have the provisionally certificated teachers and that these certificates should be granted more readily and by many different people, such as county superintendents and district superintendents.

Some superintendents would allow more time to meet the requirement, while others would be more demanding and require that a regular certificate be obtained at an early date after a provisional was issued.

Some superintendents felt that the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction should assist in setting up workshops and/or short courses to meet a need to obtain one or two hours of credit needed to fulfill a requirement such as in art or music. Others felt that since in most schools, even in the primary grades, the subjects are now being taught by special teachers, the need for art and/or music courses should be deleted.

As an alternative to the current certification system, there were some who would relax the current requirements and make certification easier, while others would enforce the existing regulations and tighten the requirements for the future.

One group of superintendents suggested issuing one certificate allowing a teacher to teach any subject and any grade, while another group would have a more specific grade and subject listed on the certificate.

It can be readily seen, therefore, that while there were many areas of consensus or near consensus, there were still many areas of conflict voiced by superintendents.

SUMMARY

Based on the results noted above, the following items appear to be action strongly recommended by district superintendents in Illinois.

1. Consideration should be given to new concepts in fulfilling the student teaching requirement, such as allowing a teacher to fulfill the requirement at his assigned school.
2. Colleges and universities should endeavor to offer a wider range of courses at extension centers.
3. All colleges and universities in Illinois should adopt administrative techniques facilitating the transfer of course credits.
4. The idea of reciprocity in the area of certification, at least on the part of several adjoining states, should be investigated.

5. More guidance and counseling in the area of certification requirements should be provided to undergraduates at colleges and universities in Illinois, as well as at the secondary schools.

6. Education courses should be made more practical.

7. College professors should endeavor to become more cognate of the problems of the classroom teacher, perhaps by switching positions with teachers for a period of time.

8. Colleges and universities should adopt more flexible programs better suited to the needs of teachers. For example, if a person needs only a course in student teaching to meet the graduation requirements, colleges and universities should not require a year's residency before allowing the course to be taken.

III. PROVISIONALLY CERTIFICATED TEACHERS IN ILLINOIS

How They View Four Critical Questions on Certification

In May, 1968, a questionnaire was also sent to a sample of 700 provisionally certificated teachers in Illinois for the purpose of collecting data of two major types. First, data was desired on the status and position of provisionally certificated teachers within their local school districts. To collect this data, an objective questionnaire format was utilized. Secondly, the opinions of provisionally certificated teachers were sought in four major areas dealing with teacher certification. To obtain these opinions, all teachers polled were asked the same four open-ended questions asked of district superintendents in April, 1968. The current study focuses upon the latter purpose. Data pertaining to the former purpose will be included in a separate study.

The sample of 700 teachers was chosen at random from a total population of approximately 4,500 provisionally certificated teachers who had responded to an earlier questionnaire. The sample was chosen in this manner, because it was felt that teachers concerned enough to answer the first questionnaire would respond to the second questionnaire. This assumption proved essentially true. Of the 700 questionnaires mailed out, a total of 564 usable questionnaires were returned on time. Ten more were received incomplete or arrived too late for processing. An additional seven were returned unanswered for miscellaneous reasons. Unfortunately, the spring school semester ended before a comprehensive follow-up could be initiated. The percentage breakdown on the response return is indicated in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1

Percentage of Questionnaires Returned

Usable Questionnaires	564	80.57%
Late or Incomplete Returns	10	1.43
Miscellaneous Returns	7	1.00
Total Returns	581	83.00%

The percentage of usable questionnaires which arrived in time for processing was over 80%, with the total return coming to 83%.

The four open-ended questions to which the teachers responded (identical to those asked of district superintendents) are listed below:

Question One: In your opinion, what could the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction do to assist provisionally certificated teachers in obtaining regular certificates?

Question Two: In your opinion, what could the teacher preparation institutions do to assist provisionally certificated teachers in obtaining regular certificates?

Question Three: What specific courses would be most useful for provisionally certificated teachers?

Question Four: What alternatives to the current certification system would you suggest?

In response to Question One, there were several clearcut response patterns. By far, the largest number of teachers (131) asked that a more flexible policy be adopted for the student teaching requirement. Typically, such persons asked that the student teaching requirement be waived after a

teacher has completed two or three years of satisfactory teaching experience. Others asked that student teaching be made more available.

Usually, teachers are not allowed to practice teach in the schools to which they are regularly assigned. An alternative to consider might be allowing a provisionally certificated teacher to practice teach in her assigned school under the guidance of the principal and student supervisor. Checks could be built in to assure the absence of "sweetheart" ratings just as effectively as in present student teaching situations. Any step in this direction would naturally involve the cooperation of both the Teacher Certification Board and teacher training institutions within the State of Illinois.

The second most frequent request was that the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction send out lists of appropriate education courses offered within Illinois, where they are to be offered, and by what institution. While this may not be possible on a statewide basis, such an idea might prove worthwhile on a regional or county basis. By the same token, to list all curriculum offerings, even on a regional basis, would prove expensive and impractical.

There were many other worthwhile ideas listed, some of which might prove feasible. However, several of them are outside the power of the Superintendent's Office to effect. Providing for the easier transfer of credits is an example. Such action would be dependent on uniform actions of the teacher training institutions within Illinois. A significant number of the responses (30) dealt entirely with the personal certification problems of the individual teachers. These could not be categorized since they dealt with personal rather than professional problems.

The response categories are listed below in descending order of frequency. For ease in handling, only those categories mentioned eight or more times are included:

Question One: In your opinion, what could the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction do to assist provisionally certificated teachers in obtaining regular certificates?

1. Grant credit for student teaching to those persons who have teaching experience; or make student teaching courses more readily available. (131)
2. Have the State Department send out lists of education courses offered, noting where they are to be offered, and by what college. (71)
3. Personal answers. (30)
4. Grant certification by individual conferences. (20)
5. Permit substitution of courses. (20)
6. Provide better understanding and quicker communications. (20)
7. Lengthen the time allowed to obtain eight hours of credit. (19)
8. Provide state-supported financial assistance for teachers to attend summer school. (17)
9. Honor certificates from other states. (16)
10. Provide more personal guidance to provisionally certificated teachers. (14)
11. Certificate experienced teachers on the basis of an examination. (12)
12. Provide prompt and consistent evaluation of transcripts. (11)

13. Facilitate the transfer of college credits. (8)

14. Remove some of the "red tape". (8)

In response to the second question, which asked what teacher preparation institutions could do to assist provisionally certificated teachers in obtaining their degree, a problem in interpretation was encountered similar to that in Question One. Many persons made suggestions for action more appropriate to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction than to the teacher training institutions. As an example, 26 persons requested the acceptance of certificates issued by other states. Then again, we also had 28 persons who concentrated on personally-oriented problems.

The vast majority of teachers, however, addressed themselves directly to the appropriate question and their ideas had a centrality of theme about them. What most teachers seemed to be asking for is more flexibility on the part of teacher training institutions. The flexibility requested dealt with everything from course content to granting credit for work experience. The largest number of responses centered on having extension courses offered in more locations with credit accepted for a degree. Other persons asked that they be allowed to take proficiency examinations to obtain credit for courses.

All of the responses in this category seemed to have a logic about them born of practicality. Whether colleges or universities are capable of such flexibility is another question. It may be that they, bound by historical tradition and such organizations as the National Council for Accreditation of

Teachers of Education, have reached the point where they are innately inflexible and unresponsive to the needs of their clients.

At any rate, the categories for which eight or more responses were given are listed below:

Question Two: In your opinion, what could the teacher preparation institutions do to assist provisionally certificated teachers in obtaining regular certificates?

1. Offer extension courses and correspondence courses in more locations and facilitate the application of course credit towards a degree. (123)
2. Allow teachers to fulfill the student teaching requirement while on the job. (45)
3. Provide more individual guidance for teachers. (35)
4. Personal answers. (28)
5. Accept certificates valid in and issued by other states. (26)
6. Coordinate institutional and state requirements. (21)
7. Consolidate education courses. (19)
8. Facilitate the substitution and transfer of courses and credits. (13)
9. Grant credit for workshop courses. (10)
10. Eliminate the "busy work" in education courses. (9)
11. Give provisionally certificated teachers the preference in summer school or allow them to pre-enroll. (8)
12. Allow teachers to take "Proficiency Exams" for credit in courses. (8)

The answers received in response to Question Three regarding what specific courses would be most useful for provisionally certificated teachers fit a somewhat expected pattern. The three most frequently named types of courses were practical methods courses in which the teachers could be observed on the job, psychology courses, and subject matter courses. The evident logic behind this thinking is that such courses would give them a better understanding of subject matter, teaching principles, and students. It often happens, however, that a teacher may perceive the focus of specific courses differently than a professor. For example, a person may perceive an educational psychology course as helping him to control children rather than understand them. This can be unfortunate and may disillusion teachers taking such courses.

Once past the three courses mentioned above, there was a large drop to the fourth most suggested course, the teaching of reading. This was followed by a cluster of miscellaneous courses.

In this section, two important facts seem to stand out. First, many of the provisionally certificated teachers polled made the point that theoretical courses do them little good in the classroom. The teachers said that they wanted an opportunity to apply what they had learned under conditions in which they were observed by an expert who could help them. This view seems somewhat contradictory to the view put forth by those teachers who want practice teaching abolished in favor of experience. But it may be that they are talking about a different kind of learning experience, dissimilar to both lecture courses and student teaching as we know them now.

The second fact that seemed to stand out is that many teachers felt they were forced to take unneeded courses while no courses were offered in other more practical areas. For example, several teachers felt that art, music, and physical education should be deleted from curricula or made optional as these are now taught by special teachers in many situations. In their place, it was suggested that there be included courses in parent and community relations, classroom management, and handling of discipline problems.

Because of the wide variance in educational and experiential background of the teachers polled, as well as the situation in which each teacher found himself, the total responses were widely scattered as noted below (only responses mentioned more than eight times are included):

Question Three: What specific courses would be most useful for provisionally certificated teachers?

1. Methods courses which allow for observation and application. (118)
2. Educational psychology and/or psychology courses. (65)
3. Courses in various subject matter areas at appropriate grade levels (language arts, math, science.) (59)
4. Courses in the teaching of reading. (30)
5. Personal answers. Normally, a listing of courses needed by an individual to fulfill requirements. (29)
6. Student teaching. (17)
7. More technical courses to the exclusion of education courses. (12)
8. Modern math courses. (11)

9. Fine arts courses. (9)

10. Courses on classroom discipline. (9)

11. Workshop courses. (9)

12. Courses tailored to meet individual needs and interest. (8)

13. Courses in American and/or Illinois government. (8)

The extent to which the concept of student teaching disturbs many provisionally certificated teachers is illustrated by the response to Question Four which asked for suggested alternatives to the current certification system. Ninety-six persons suggested that the student teaching requirement be waived. In addition, 24 others suggested that certification be based on individual qualifications and experience as determined primarily by their principal. Several other proposed changes in the area of certification were also made, some of which implicitly hinted at the elimination of the student teaching requirement.

In some cases, the answers to Question Four were quite lengthy. Many teachers felt the certification requirements as applied to their own personal cases were grossly unfair. The fact that some teachers with only two years of college were allowed to teach, while they had to get more and more credits to continue teaching was particularly disturbing.

This particular question must have struck a sensitive, emotional chord because of the personal and emotional tone of a large number of the answers. Another sensitive area to many teachers was the requirement for courses in subjects that they do not teach, either because they are in departmental programs or because special teachers teach subjects such as

art. Once again, the perception was voiced that the amount of time and money invested in many education courses is not commensurate with the practical help received.

The list of alternatives suggested by four or more persons is included below:

Question Four: What alternatives to the current certification system would you suggest?

1. Waive student teaching requirement for experienced teachers. (96)
2. Personal answers. (35)
3. Nationalize the certification requirements. (30)
4. Allow for more specialization and/or lessen the educational course requirements. (26)
5. Grant certification on individual qualification and experience. Be more flexible. Accept recommendations of principal. (24)
6. Allow college credit for a certain number years of teaching experience. (16)
7. Lengthen the time allowed to renew certificates. (15)
8. Revise and/or lower certification requirements. (21)
9. Allow proficiency test for credit. (8)
10. Automatically certify all persons with A. B. and B.S. degrees. (8)
11. Methods courses should be made more flexible. (5)
12. Delete history and government requirements. (4)

SUMMARY

If the data collected has any relevance at all, and it would seem that it does, the number one problem facing provisionally certificated teachers in Illinois today is the fulfillment of the student teaching requirement. The positive value of student teaching for new and/or inexperienced teachers is unquestioned. Forcing student teaching on an experienced teacher with a rating of excellent or higher may be an unjustified use of administrative justice. In between the two extremes is a broad gray area demanding both attention and innovation. There are several alternatives to the present student teaching requirement which might prove of greater benefit to provisionally certificated teachers and ultimately to students. Teachers could be allowed to practice teach at their assigned schools under supervision or practice teaching could be waived in lieu of satisfactory experience.

Several other suggestions made by teachers which may be of potential value and certainly are worth considering are listed below in random order:

(1) Notify teachers as to when and where courses required by them are being offered. (Already done in many counties and regions.)

(2) Provide for reciprocity of certificates between states wherever possible.

(3) Provide for reciprocity of courses between institutions of higher learning.

(4) Inaugurate alternate methods of certification, such as certification by examination.

(5) Provide more individualized extension course offerings and allow extension courses to be credited toward a degree.

(6) Make institutional curricula and certification procedures more flexible.

It would appear that if any or all of these suggestions are to be implemented, there will be a need for much closer working relationships between teacher training institutions, certifying bodies, and local school systems than has existed in the past.

IV. CONVERGENT VIEWS

In view of the divergent sample from which opinions were drawn regarding provisional certification, it is remarkable that so high a level of concensus was achieved. The views of both the teachers and the superintendents were indeed convergent. So convergent, in fact, that the summary section of both studies could be interchanged with little or no loss of meaning.

Essentially, the same problems are perceived as serious impediments to certification by teachers and administrators alike. Moreover, both groups also perceive the same measures as effective solutions to these problems.

Several courses of action can be taken immediately to assist provisionally certificated teachers to obtain a regular certificate quickly and to enable future teachers to fulfill needed requirements prior to graduation. An improved counseling program would help both graduates and undergraduates. Increased flexibility in the area of student teaching and graduation requirements might also ease the situation considerably. But not all solutions can be quickly arrived at.

Long-range action requiring detailed planning and cooperative action on the part of all concerned is needed. Considerable research and planning have been initiated by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and an experimental program in teacher personnel is in the prototype stages.

But in order for this planning to bear fruit, it is essential that teacher training institutions and local school districts, acting cooperatively with their county superintendent of schools, initiate research and planning programs of their own. If such planning does not take place, and if this planning is not

followed up with action, the results could be disastrous for the institutions involved. For it would mean that they will be forced to react to future change, rather than playing an active part in determining what that change should be.